

DRILL HALL THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
MIKE RUSSO

HOT SHORTS

Short Play Festival

*Live local
stories
on stage*

17-27
SEPTEMBER
2026

the DRILL  THEATRE
company

COMEDY ★ DRAMA ★ MYSTERY ★ LOVE ★ FAMILY
HOPE ★ TWIST ★ SECRETS ★ LAUGHTER ★ LOCAL STORIES



HOT SHORTS 2026 • THE FINALISTS

God Will See You Now

by **Charles Hambling**

Director **Dixie Miller and**

Brooke Karabache

It takes a Retirement Village to raise a child. Or not.

Charles is a graduate of Toi Whakaari, the New Zealand Drama School. His 25 years as a professional actor included STC's *Nicholas Nickleby* and tours with Martin Shaw, Paul Eddington and Lauren Bacall. He has written for radio and TV and taught high school drama.

Carl Sparre – Roger

Peter Gough – Nigel

Sarah Vierod – Myra

Jimmy Strong – George

Brooke Karabache – Chloe

Pebbles' Story

by **Linda Meades**

Director **Mike Russo**

What if your cat isn't your loving companion but a brilliant strategist who has spent years expertly training you? Pebbles reveals the secrets behind feline manipulation.

Linda is a Mullumbimby writer and performer inspired by the stories hidden in everyday life. She loves being part of a creative community and happily answers to Pebbles, her discerning feline companion.

Freya Marshall Rosato – Pebbles

The Bucket List

by **Bette Guy**

Director **Bette Guy**

Friends for 60 years, Deborah and Mary have a list of what they long to do before they die. It is Deborah's birthday and she plans to do what is at the top of her Bucket List.

Bette has written over two dozen short and full-length plays. She won the Patrick White Award for *The Other Side of the Lake* and was shortlisted for the Qld Premier's Award for *Soft Murder*. She has lived in the Northern Rivers for twenty-five years.

Jenny Craig – Deborah Paxton

Kathryn McMillan – Mary Cooper

Liela's Calling

by **Belinda Lopez**

Director **Belinda Lopez & Jill Harrison**

A quirky comedy about finding your voice, following your passion, and refusing to let the ordinary stay ordinary, much to the chagrin of others.

Belinda is a dancer, actor, director and writer. Her play *The Window Outside*, enjoyed two Melbourne seasons, a Victorian tour, and an international debut in Canada. Her short plays have also been showcased in Sydney's Short and Sweet Festivals.

Jemma Collins – Liela

Angela McWhinney – Mother

Michael Cadogan – Sam

Riddhi – Jenny





The Fortune Teller

by Al Percival
Director Al Percival

There are those among us who claim to divine what cannot be seen, communicate with the dead and see into the future. When Alice and Craig chance upon a Fortune Teller in a local market, what seems like a bit of fun quickly turns serious. But who can you really trust to tell you the truth?

Al has been involved in Theatre since studying Drama at school. He has appeared in various productions through the years, and this is his second year entering Hot Shorts, having come third in the popular vote last time for *Judgement Day*.

Aya Emery – Madame Pompidou
Renae Heremaia – Alice
Utku Ayhan – Craig

Forgotten

by Warwick Porter
Director Warwick Porter

When a dodgy, coke-snorting dive company forgets someone at sea, the cover-up begins. Blending dark comedy with genuine heart, this fast-moving play asks what it means when authority is more concerned with deception than the well-being of others.

Warwick is an Ocean Shores-based scriptwriter who was runner-up in Hot Shorts 2024. Warwick studied music composition at Southern Cross University, and his other creative outlet is composing dance music and performing as a DJ and pianist.

Bindy Kelly – Helen
Tatiana Diaz – Audrey
Warwick Porter – Jack
Marty Sabo – American Tourist

CAST YOUR VOTE FOR THE HOTTEST SHORT OF 2026



Sisters

by David Swann

Director David Swann

A black comedy about two siblings who literally try to bury the past.

David is a part-time screenwriter and minion of the Uber God.

Jessica Bellamy – Jas

Leah Van Ewijk – Cal

David Swann – Martin

The Jacket

by Ana Louisa Davis

Director Tim Winton-Brown

A teenager who's gone off the rails and a woman old enough to be his grandmother. Will Kate give Jacob what he needs or will she get what she really wants?

Ana is a writer with a degree in Drama from Newcastle Uni who is undertaking a PhD in Creative Writing at Griffith Uni. *The Jacket* is her third Hot Shorts play.

Linda Rutledge – Kate

Kodi Spencer – Jacob



The She Dog, The Man and The Old Gods

by Haydn

Director Deborah Mills

A farmer about to die meets a creature on a perilous, cosmic mission. Can they find solace, make sense of their lives and fulfil their destinies as death stalks them both?

Haydn is taken by Franco-Belgian graphic novels, ancient and Mediaeval art, archeology, adjectival fronting and animals that run fast, soar high and rest well.

Tatiana Diaz – She Dog

Peter Gough – Man

Emergency Stop

by Stephen O'Grady

Director Danielle Linegar

A woman with a problem, a dog on the edge, a late night road trip in rural Australia. When the police get involved, events take an unsettling turn for all parties.

A former journalist and academic, Stephen now turns to creative writing examining how power is abused in human relations. He has onstage experience with community theatre in Murwillumbah, Uki, Brisbane and the Fraser Coast, and performed in Hot Shorts 2024. This play was developed with the Murwillumbah Theatre Company.

Shelley McNamara – Deborah Farnworth

Natasha Jankovic – Veronica Hassler

Declan Wood – Jake Miller



THE CREW

Artistic Director – Mike Russo

Selection and Development Panel – Russell Eldridge, Peter Gough, Susan Melhuish

Master of Ceremonies – Michael Sharmon

Stage Management – ZaKaiRan and members of DHTC

Lighting and Sound – Hielrick

Set Design – Mike Russo

Set Construction – Steve Smart, Warren Kennedy, Jimmy Strong

Theatre Manager and Marketing – Bianca Sirianni

Marketing – Andy Bambach, Anna Podgorczyk

Front of House Manager and Program – Warren Kennedy

Front of House – Lorrie Cruickshank, Izzy Durbin

Kitchen – Mathew Constable and members of Mullum Clayworkers

DHTC Committee – Michael Sharmon, Mike Russo, Anna Podgorczyk, Chris Benaud, Andrew Bambach, Bianca Sirianni, Warren Kennedy

Artistic Director's Message

This fifteenth iteration of Hot Shorts again celebrates our community's creative skills and energy. That Hot Shorts has been a hugely popular and regular theatrical event for 30 years is testimony to the extent of that creativity and energy.

These ten plays are by local writers and were selected from 24 entries. Since February we have work-shopped them and the writers have rewritten them, before handing them to the directors and actors to produce what you see tonight. My deepest thanks to all involved for making my task of bringing them together as easy and enjoyable as possible. I feel that overall HOT SHORTS 2026 is our best ever.

We hope you enjoy the results and vote for your favourite play

Our thanks to everyone whose name you see in this program for their hard work in creating this celebration of community creativity.

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE PLAYS

As you leave the theatre there will be voting slips and pencils for you to cast your vote for your three favourite plays.

To reward our playwrights there are three cash prizes determined by audience vote and your favourite play could be the winner.

Votes are tallied and kept secret until after the final performance when the winners will be announced. These prizes total \$1,500.

So, support your local playwright by casting your vote.

WARNING: Some HOT SHORTS contain adult themes, coarse language and flashing lights.